

Meeting Summary  
ESSB 6392 Workgroup Meeting #3  
Thursday, Sep. 9, 2010  
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.  
Puget Sound Regional Council  
1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500, Seattle

**Workgroup members:**

- Angie Thomson, Facilitator
- Bob Powers, Seattle Department of Transportation
- David Hull, King County Metro
- Greg Walker, Sound Transit
- Julie Meredith, SR 520 Program
- Theresa Doherty, University of Washington
- Sara Belz, Seattle City Council (substitute for Michael Fong)

**Welcome and introductions (Angie Thomson)**

Angie Thomson, facilitator, welcomed everyone to the third ESSB 6392 Workgroup meeting and reviewed the agenda. Workgroup members introduced themselves.

**Recap from Aug. 19 (Kerry Ruth)**

Kerry Ruth, I-5 to Medina Project Engineering Manager, led a recap of the Aug. 19 ESSB 6392 Workgroup meeting. The Workgroup discussed the following topics at the last meeting:

- Bicycle and pedestrian routes in the Montlake and I-5 vicinity.
- Bus stop locations and connectivity update.
- Noise reduction strategies.
- Health Impact Assessment.
- Arboretum traffic calming and traffic management.
- Turning, queuing and lane channelization for the second bascule bridge, E Lake Washington Boulevard and the SR 520 westbound off-ramp.
- The left turn movement from 24th Avenue E onto E Lake Washington Boulevard. At the last meeting, the Workgroup requested information about the effects of restricting this movement. Ms. Ruth shared follow-up information with the Workgroup about this restricted movement, including that this movement would bring 480 additional

vehicles to Montlake Boulevard during peak-hour operations, and would require infrastructure improvements beyond what is called for in the preferred alternative. These improvements would impact the neighborhoods to the south, so these improvements are not being considered at this time.

([Slide 3](#) provides additional information)

**QUESTION:** At our last meeting, didn't we discuss looking at left turn restrictions on peak hours or weekends only? (Bob Powers)

**RESPONSE:** *In our coordination with the Arboretum Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC), we discussed that the left turn onto 24th Avenue E is needed during peak hours, but there is an opportunity to manage traffic during non-peak hours. We're still discussing this with the ABGC, and we'll discuss this more during our meeting today. (Kerry Ruth)*

**Roadway operations: I-5/SR 520 reversible transit/HOV lane and Portage Bay Bridge managed shoulder (Kerry Ruth)**

**I-5/SR 520 reversible transit/HOV lane**

Ms. Ruth shared the Technical Coordination Team (TCT) recommendations for the SR 520/I-5 interchange. These recommendations include:

- Implementing the SR 520/I-5 interchange design described in the preferred alternative.
- A single-lane, reversible direct access ramp that will connect from the westbound SR 520 transit/HOV lane to the southbound I-5 express lanes during the morning period of express lane operations.
- During the evening period, the direct access ramp will connect northbound I-5 express lanes to the eastbound SR 520 transit/HOV lane.
- The preferred alternative will remove one lane of the I-5 express lanes. This lane removal will happen just north of the I-5/SR 520 interchange, and will make room for the new reversible transit/HOV direct access ramp connecting I-5 to SR 520.

([Slide 4](#) provides additional information)

**QUESTION:** I understand that WSDOT is looking at changing access and operations to express lanes and other facilities in the Seattle area. Do those changes have an impact on this decision? I'd love to see the reversible lane in both directions. (David Hull)

**RESPONSE:** *The department has looked at changing access in the past. However, it has been determined that those efforts are considered as part of an I-5 improvement project, and not part of the SR 520 project. The design of the preferred alternative does not preclude these future improvements from being made. (Julie Meredith)*

Workgroup Recommendation: The Workgroup supported maintaining the I-5/SR 520 reversible transit/HOV lane that was included in the April 2010 preferred alternative.

### **Portage Bay Bridge managed shoulder**

Ms. Ruth provided the Workgroup with an overview of TCT recommendations for the Portage Bay Bridge managed shoulder. These recommendations include:

- The westbound managed shoulder lane should be included as described in the preferred alternative.
- The shoulder lane provides the function of an auxiliary lane by using the westbound shoulder to maintain acceptable traffic operations during the peak commute periods, special events, and for accident management.
- The shoulder allows for a narrower footprint for the Portage Bay Bridge and maintains traffic operations on both the freeway and local system when needed to help relieve congestion.
- The TCT recommends maintaining the planted median on the Portage Bay Bridge as was defined in the preferred alternative, though the second part of this recommendation is to include review of this as part of a future aesthetics/urban design effort.

Ms. Ruth explained that the managed shoulder would be vital for traffic management during peak traffic hours and also during large events, such as a University of Washington Husky game.

([Slide 5](#) provides additional information)

**QUESTION:** I don't mind the recommendation to leave in the planted median on the Portage Bay Bridge, but I want to be clear that the opportunity is still there to eliminate it. From a structural or civil layout point of view, is there a rule about having a planted median? (Bob Powers)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes, the opportunity is there to eliminate it, and it will be considered as part of future streetscape work. (Kerry Ruth)*

Workgroup Recommendation: The Workgroup supported maintaining the managed shoulder and planted median on the planted median that was included in the April 2009 preferred alternative.

### **Bus stop locations and connectivity (Kerry Ruth)**

Ms. Ruth reviewed bus stop location and connectivity information that has been presented at the past two Workgroup meetings. Ms. Ruth reminded the Workgroup that they endorsed the TCT's recommendations for the stops in the Montlake Interchange area, including:

- Moving regional bus stops on the Montlake Lid west to be closer to Montlake Boulevard.
- Installing a bus pullout in the eastbound transit/HOV direct-access lane.

- Locating a northbound local bus stop on Montlake Boulevard near regional bus stops on lid.
- Locating a southbound local bus stop near Hop-In Grocery Store at Montlake Boulevard and E Roanoke Street intersection.

Ms. Ruth noted that in order to provide a bus stop on the Montlake Lid, WSDOT would need to add a receiving lane to the north of the bus stop which would remove 2 to 6 feet of the shoulder on Montlake Boulevard north of SR 520, along the east side of the street.

**QUESTION:** If you removed 2 to 6 feet [for the receiving lane], would that shift over the location of the sidewalk, or would the sidewalk remain the same? (Greg Walker)

**RESPONSE:** *The eastern edge of the sidewalk will remain the same through this area. Additionally, we may have an opportunity to increase the sidewalk to 10 feet wide. (Kerry Ruth)*

**QUESTION:** I don't think we're truly replacing the function of the current freeway flyer station. These proposed stops will serve the University District, not downtown as the existing stops do today. Additionally, as we move the bus pull-out in the eastbound direction closer to the intersection, we need to think about driver sight distance, and what safety impacts could come from moving the bus pull-out closer to the intersection. (David Hull)

**RESPONSE:** *We'll take a look at that. (Kerry Ruth)*

**QUESTION:** For the bus stop located on Montlake Boulevard near the Hop-In Grocery, is there an opportunity to move this stop to a different location on the block while still maintaining access to the business? (Bob Powers)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes, there is an opportunity for this. As we move forward with designs in this area, WSDOT will consult with the Hop-In owner to ensure access and to minimize impacts. (Kerry Ruth)*

**QUESTION:** Can pedestrians cross Montlake Boulevard at E Hamlin Street? (Bob Powers)

**RESPONSE:** *It will be the same as today on E Hamlin Street, where pedestrians are not able to cross Montlake Boulevard. The plan is to only make restriping improvements on Montlake Boulevard, and allow pedestrians to cross Montlake Boulevard at E Shelby Street, as they do today. (Kerry Ruth)*

**QUESTION:** Why can't pedestrians cross at the north leg of Montlake Boulevard? Why is there no crosswalk there? (Bob Powers)

**RESPONSE:** *There is a pedestrian path provided under Montlake Boulevard, and we can look into that. (Kerry Ruth)*

Ms. Ruth provided the Workgroup with an overview of a few of the key findings in the High Capacity Transit plan. These findings identified transit users in the Montlake Triangle area, and specifically found that 60 percent of transit users in the Montlake Triangle area will be headed towards the University of Washington campus or the University of Washington medical center. The other 40 percent of transit users will be transferring to other buses, or headed to the future University Link light rail station. Ms. Ruth explained that the information in the High Capacity Transit plan has helped to inform the bus stop location recommendations of the TCT. Each of these TCT's recommendations for bus stops in the Montlake Triangle area all meet the legislative intent of ESSB 6392 to provide a connection of less than 1,200 feet between the bus stops and University of Washington light rail station. The TCT's recommendations include:

- Considering stops A, B and C for further evaluation, and to be included in the Montlake Triangle improvements. The TCT recommends these stops because:
  - Shortest walk time to campus destinations.
  - Transfer to light rail is a maximum of 1,010 feet.
  - Additional improvements are recommended to improve pedestrian pathways including further evaluation of an additional crosswalk between the Medical Center and the triangle to improve the connection to the southbound stop.
  - Stops D-H are not recommended for near term improvements, but could be considered as continued transit planning efforts identify additional service and bus stop needs.
  - These options are not precluded by implementation of options A, B, and C, but additional infrastructure would be required to provide service at these locations.

([Slides 6-7](#) provide additional information)

**COMMENT:** I support these recommended stops, but how does the final decision get made? Is it King County Metro? The UW? Sound Transit? We need to figure out where that decision-making authority lies. (Bob Powers)

**COMMENT:** For me, it's not a choice of one stop location or the other. It's a choice of trying to move the bus stop as close to the [NE Pacific Street/Montlake Boulevard] intersection as possible. The three TCT bus stop recommendations are representative of different spaces on the street. (Greg Walker)

**COMMENT:** The only difference between the three is that with stop location C, buses have a pull-out. (David Hull)

**RESPONSE:** *David is correct, stop locations A and B are in-lane stops, and location C provides a pull-out. With stop location C, the TCT is concerned that this location may have a direct impact on the Montlake Triangle parking garage. Stop location A moves the bus farther south on NE Pacific Street, but location A was identified in the High Capacity Transit plan. Stop location*

*B replaces an existing taxi pull-out, but this location needs to be evaluated closely to ensure that taxis have an alternative area to use. (Kerry Ruth)*

**COMMENT:** The big question is do we take buses out of the flow of traffic, or let them stay in the lane for stops? King County Metro prefers in-lane stops. (David Hull)

**COMMENT:** It's important to not lose sight of the constituencies that we're serving with these stops, and we need to evaluate the travel time numbers for each stop locations. As we've heard, 30 percent of riders are going to the University of Washington campus, 30 percent are going to the University of Washington hospital, 20 percent are transferring between buses, and 20 percent will access the future Link light rail station. It will be important for us to keep these figures in mind as we plan these stops. (Greg Walker)

**COMMENT:** I agree with Greg Walker. It's important that we don't lose sight of where these riders are headed. (Theresa Doherty)

**QUESTION:** Will travel time and distance information be included in the Workgroup's report? (Theresa Doherty)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes, this information will be available in the draft report that will be published on Sep. 13. (Kerry Ruth)*

Workgroup Recommendation: The Workgroup supported moving forward with the TCT's recommendation for bus stop locations on the Montlake Lid, and further evaluation of bus stops in the Montlake Triangle area.

### **Montlake second bascule bridge phasing (Stephanie Brown)**

Stephanie Brown, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) shared background information about the Montlake second bascule bridge. This background information includes:

- The Seattle City Council expressed concern about the timing of and need for the second bascule bridge, particularly in the context of impacts to adjacent property owners.
- The Seattle City Council asked WSDOT to consider transportation demand management and other traffic management measures that might postpone the need for the bridge.
- The TCT formed a subcommittee to identify triggers for construction and other phasing strategies with representatives from WSDOT, SDOT, Seattle City Council, King County Metro, Sound Transit, and UW and to propose final recommendations.

Ms. Brown provided the Workgroup with an overview of the TCT's recommendations for the phasing of the Montlake second bascule bridge. These recommendations include:

- Establish transit travel time, bicycle/pedestrian level of service and SR 520 operations measures to trigger construction of a second bascule bridge.

- Identify opportunities to implement traffic management strategies.

([Slide 8](#) provides additional information)

**QUESTION:** Is the second bascule bridge the last piece of the project to be constructed? (Sara Belz)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes, the second bascule bridge will be constructed after the other elements of the preferred alternative are completed. Currently, this is scheduled to take place between 2016 and 2018. (Stephanie Brown)*

**QUESTION:** How will waiting to build the second bascule bridge impact transit once the preferred alternative is built out? How will having only one bridge impact transit mobility? (Bob Powers)

**RESPONSE:** *Our next steps will be to run a model of the preferred alternative without the second bascule bridge to determine when traffic triggers will be set. During construction in this area, it will be difficult to determine where triggers are, so we need to do this ahead of time through traffic modeling. We will be beginning this process soon. (Michael Horntvedt)*

**QUESTION:** Will this traffic analysis tell us what the impact will be to transit operations on Montlake? (Bob Powers)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes, this is our goal. (Michael Horntvedt)*

Workgroup Recommendation: The Workgroup supported further study of the TCT's proposed phasing of the Montlake second bascule bridge.

### **Neighborhood traffic management (Stephanie Brown)**

Ms. Brown provided the Workgroup with an overview of neighborhood traffic management. Specifically, Ms. Brown shared that:

- The SR 520 I-5 to Medina preferred alternative removes the existing Lake Washington Boulevard ramps, which changes the way that vehicles will travel to and from the SR 520 corridor.
- Traffic modeling predicts these changes will not result in significant changes to city streets, but there are still concerns from neighborhood groups about potential adverse impacts due to increased traffic volumes.

Ms. Brown shared the TCT recommendations for neighborhood traffic management, which include:

- Evaluating the potential for traffic management on City of Seattle streets within and adjacent to the project area. Ms. Brown pointed out that this evaluation should be accompanied by a plan for evaluating and integrating applicable intelligent transportation system (ITS) tools and techniques.
- Establishing a schedule for implementation of these systems, as well as identifying the agencies responsible for implementation.

([Slide 9](#) provides additional information)

**QUESTION:** Regarding the development of a plan in 2012 after the Final Environmental Impact Statement is completed, how long could this planning take? (Sara Belz)

**RESPONSE:** *This planning could take six months to one year, depending on the ITS design.*  
(Stephanie Brown)

Workgroup Recommendation: The Workgroup supported the TCT's recommendations for next steps related to neighborhood traffic management.

### **Corridor management plan (Mark Bandy)**

Mark Bandy, WSDOT traffic engineer, provided the workgroup with an overview of the TCT's recommendations for a corridor management plan. These recommendations revolve around WSDOT's SR 520 corridor management strategies, many of which are already in place. These strategies include:

- Complete the HOV lanes throughout the entire length of the SR 520 corridor
- Continue ITS projects that will keep the public informed, such as ramp metering, camera systems, and data systems.
- Incident response programs that will help reduce the amount of incidents, such as accidents and people running out of gas along the corridor.
- Variable speed limit systems that will reduce collisions. These systems are the same type of system as the SR 520 managed shoulder, and they will be deployed at the same time.
- Variable tolling, which will assist with revenue generation and traffic management.
- Traffic demand management strategies, including carpooling incentives, bus pass subsidies, and flexible carpooling, also known as slugging in other areas such as the San Francisco bay area and Washington D.C.



Mr. Bandy shared that these strategies should result in a corridor that is well positioned to meet the established HOV lane performance standards and corridor performance expectations stated in ESSB 6392.

([Slide 10](#) provides additional information)

**QUESTION:** What is slugging, or flexible carpooling? (Theresa Doherty)

**RESPONSE:** *Slugging, also known as flexible carpooling, is a type of transportation demand strategy. SR 520 was identified as a candidate corridor, and WSDOT will begin this pilot program along SR 520 in Spring 2011. Flexible carpooling is a program that people can sign up for online, and they must be approved to participate. Participants needing a ride can then wait by the side of the road at a specified location for a ride to various destinations. A driver participating in the program can pick you up and take advantage of the HOV lane or cheaper carpooling rates on HOT lanes. (Mark Bandy)*

**COMMENT:** I wanted to commend WSDOT for their active traffic management programs that are already in place. Erratic driver behavior can often be caused by a lack of information, and I'm happy to see that WSDOT is now providing more information for drivers. (Greg Walker)

**RESPONSE:** *We have seen good driver compliance with our traffic management program so far. I encourage everyone to visit [www.smarterhighways.com](http://www.smarterhighways.com) if you're interested in more information. (Mark Bandy)*

**QUESTION:** Have you seen a reduction in secondary accidents so far with the traffic management program? (David Hull)

**RESPONSE:** *It's still too early to tell. However, we have noticed that accidents are lower than usual. We are confident that we will see this trend will continue. (Mark Bandy)*

Workgroup Recommendation: The Workgroup supported the TCT's recommendations for a corridor management strategy.

#### **Light rail accommodation (Kerry Ruth)**

Ms. Ruth provided the Workgroup with a background on the SR 520 preferred alternative's light rail accommodation. Ms. Ruth shared that the preferred alternative incorporates specific design features on the replacement floating bridge and approaches that support future conversion to light rail while minimizing reconstruction of the highway infrastructure. These design features include a gap between the eastbound and westbound segments on the western high-rise, the ability to add stability pontoons to offset the weight of light rail, and the ability to reduce shoulder widths to accommodate future light rail.

Ms. Ruth shared the TCT's recommendations for light rail accommodation. These recommendations include:

- Endorsing the work that has been completed by the SR 520 project team to ensure compatibility of the corridor with potential future LRT service.
- The project can accommodate future light rail in two different configurations with some capital investment, and maintains four options for connecting light rail to the UW light rail station at Husky Stadium.

([Slide 11](#) provides additional information)

Workgroup Recommendation: The Workgroup supported the TCT's recommendation to maintain the preferred alternative design that supports future conversion to light rail accommodation.

### **Urban design and streetscape (Kerry Ruth)**

Ms. Ruth shared the TCT's recommendations for urban design and streetscape. These recommendations include:

- Support for collaboration between WSDOT, the Seattle Design Commission, the City of Seattle, the UW Architectural Commission, the ABGC, the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board, the Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board and Seattle neighborhoods.
- In this collaboration, the TCT supports work to expand and refine and aesthetic vision, establish goals and suggest design treatments for urban design and streetscapes within the project area.
- This collaboration would include co-developing a community engagement process for refining the goals and principles and would result in a set of urban design guidelines that would inform and direct final design and construction of SR 520.

Ms. Ruth acknowledged that in the preferred alternative fly-through video, many visuals were shown to help inform what the look and feel of the project would be for the entire SR 520 corridor. Ms. Ruth recognized that these designs would benefit greatly from going through a public outreach process, and work with the Seattle Design Commission and others. Ms. Ruth shared that WSDOT has not started this outreach effort yet, but will in the near future.

([Slide 12](#) provides additional information)

**QUESTION:** Do other large projects have urban design committees with a broad range of participants? (Theresa Doherty)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes, other large projects also go through this process. WSDOT typically works with the Seattle Design Commission on projects like this. (Kerry Ruth)*

**QUESTION:** With the Alaskan Way Viaduct, the design/build contractor is required to go to the Seattle Design Commission and it's not an optional step. Is that the same for this project? (Bob Powers)

**RESPONSE:** *This is correct, we are required to follow the urban design guidelines and collaborate with the Seattle Design Commission. (Kerry Ruth)*

**COMMENT:** Working with the Design Commission as early as possible will be important. (Bob Powers)

Workgroup Recommendation: The Workgroup supported the TCT's recommendations for urban design and streetscape.

### **Public comment**

Comments below are a summary of verbal comments and are not recorded verbatim.

#### **Comment 1: Paul Locke**

I'm concerned about costs in our transportation system. I've been watching the South Lake Union Street car, and I see no reason to have an operator. If the only reason we have an operator on these modes of transportation is for safety purposes, I think we're paying at least 30 to 35 percent more than we should be. I also think that tolling on SR 520 will really give users headaches, and the revenue won't cover the cost of the bridge.

#### **Comment 2: Brent White**

I frequently use the bus and light rail, and I remain concerned about the connectivity between buses coming across SR 520 and accessing the light rail station at the UW. Now that the freeway stop will be removed, we need more service in this area. I hope we don't waste more money on buses going all the way across SR 520, just to access downtown, because then what's the point of the U-Link station in the first place? We need to have our buses run quickly and smoothly to the U-Link station, and have users take light rail to their destinations. I also believe that buses should run on the outer lane as opposed to the inner lane on Montlake Boulevard to avoid having to worm across traffic. My hope is that we'll be able to save bus service hours, spend less tax money on unneeded bus service, and make our transportation system work the way it was intended to.

#### **Comment 3: Mark Weed**

I continue to have difficulty with the phasing plans for the second bascule bridge. I'm very surprised that transit agencies haven't said anything about the difficulties that will happen without the bridge in the Montlake area. We as a business community think that delaying the construction of the second bascule bridge doesn't make much sense, for transit or for freight mobility. The rest of the plans for SR 520 are moving along quite rapidly. The sooner this bridge phasing decision is made, the better for the City of Seattle, and the neighborhoods in the region.

**Comment 6: Virginia Gunby with the Ravenna-Bryant Community Association**

I've been sitting in on meetings with the Arboretum Board, and I think there's a disconnect between that group and this group. I think you should have a representative from the Arboretum sitting at this table with you. The phasing of the Montlake second bascule bridge wasn't in the Arboretum's work plan or scope, yet it is a major influence upon traffic through the Arboretum. My goal is to look at statistics at how tolling and transit operations are going to be increased to reduce auto trips through that area, but we still need to have a good definition of the need of that area. The transit agency representatives should be screaming that we need preferential treatment of transit through that area. I also want to talk about corridor management plan that is housed at the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). I think it would be very beneficial for this group to look at that plan. Finally, Larry Sinnott couldn't be here tonight, and he wanted me to share that he thinks the ABGC wants to pursue an added lane south of the Hop-In Grocery.

**Comment 7: Jorgen Bader with the University District Community Council**

I'd like to point out a few things on the slides you showed us this afternoon. On slide number 3 with respect to left turn, it was clear from Arboretum meeting that there was to be no left turn from 24th Avenue E to E Lake Washington Boulevard, except during rush hour or when needed. The norm should be no left turns. I think you should connect with the ABGC and follow the nature of the discussion, as they said that the left turn on 24th Avenue E should only be used for rush hour. On slide number 12, I think your designs shown for the Arboretum are terrible. The pillars going across Foster Island are brutalist, and the designs for the Montlake Lid are sterile. On slide number 8, Metro has said they will run more buses along 23rd Avenue E if it wasn't for all of the congestion. We need to revisit this, as it could be a good idea.

**Comment 8: John Niles with the Coalition for Effective Transportation Alternatives**

I'd like to respond to the comment from the Brent White about buses dropping people off at the light rail station. The PSRC modeled the 2040 transportation environment, and included the expansion of light rail, the design of this bridge, and other factors in their model. They came up with startling findings about transit in 2040 that needs to be understood. PSRC discovered that

rail boardings in 2040 will expand 40 fold and bus boardings will double. However, in 2040, the PSRC believes that bus boardings will outnumber rail boardings from 4 to 1. Giving people easy bus access from the east side to downtown Seattle will be critical, especially given the PSRC's projections.

### **Workgroup comments (Angie Thomson)**

Ms. Thomson invited the Workgroup members to comment on the draft recommendations report.

**Comment:** I'm a member of the ABGC, and I'd like to address the comments about the ABGC and left turns on 24th Avenue E. The ABGC has had numerous conversations about left turn on 24th Avenue E. There are many strong opinions about this in the committee, but the committee has taken no position on this yet. (Theresa Doherty)

**Comment:** We appreciate the work that the TCT has done, and the comments that we've received from the public. It continues to be our goal to ensure that transit becomes a competitive mode of transportation. In doing this, we will continue to depend on people getting out of their cars and taking light rail or the bus. (David Hull)

### **Adjourn**

The group was reminded that the public comment period for the design refinements and transit recommendations report will be from Sep. 13 through 24, with the final report due to the Governor and Legislature on Oct. 1. The next Workgroup meeting will be held on Thursday, Nov. 18. Angie Thomson, facilitator, adjourned the group.

([Slides 14-16](#) provide additional information)